

ANCIENT ARMOUR

BELONGING TO THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE

THE REPORT OF MASTER JAMES ANDERSON, EX-TREASURER,
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE ANCIENT ARMOUR, AS RECORDED
IN THE MINUTES OF PARLIAMENT, 24TH JANUARY 1862

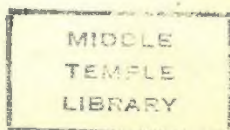
DURING last summer I caused an examination to be made of the Armour belonging to the Society which had been deposited in the Elizabeth or Minstrel's Gallery of the Hall where it had remained for many years.

The collection included 17 Cuirasses, breastplates and back pieces, with pauldrons and rear braces; 38 Morions or Steel Caps of a conical form, bearing a recurved spike at the top; 14 Matchlock Muskets and 12 Stands or Rests; 3 Shields or Targets; 1 Halbert, and 2 long Pikes.

There seems no reason to doubt that this Armour, with the exception of the Halbert, which is of later date, was of the time of Queen Elizabeth; and in this opinion I was confirmed by different Members of the Archaeological Society, and also by Officers from the Armoury in the Tower, by whom the Armour had been inspected. The Cuirasses, Shields or Targets, and Morions had been from time to time indiscriminately covered with black paint. But it appearing that some of the sets were of polished steel, I caused the Armour to be thoroughly cleaned and the paint on such pieces of it as were of polished steel to be removed. It was then ascertained that the three Shields or Targets, three of the Cuirasses and three of the Morions or Steel Caps were of Milanese work and exquisitely carved.

On one of the Morions is engraved the subject of Mucius Scaevola before Porsena, on whom a pet dog is represented as leaping.

There is a Breast and Back Plate, with a Helmet belonging to the suit, which are covered with arabesques and devices and partially gilded, the workmanship being very beautiful. On the Helmet is a design formed by branches of a briar rooted in a heart supported by two hands issuant from clouds. The briar blossoms with heraldic roses, and amongst its branches are represented a number of reptiles and other animals.



On the upper portion of the Cuirass there are three escutcheons charged respectively as follows:

1. A demilion crowned issuant from water.
2. A lion rampant.
3. A lion rampant crowned and ensigned with a coronet.

Above these escutcheons is an open dexter hand issuant from a cloud. On the centre of the Cuirass there is the allegorical figure of a nude woman tied to a tree, the left hand chained to a branch: the word "Belgica" being inscribed on a tablet under her feet. On the dexter side there is a lion rampant grasping a sword as if rescuing the woman from a sea monster, and on the sinister side is a dragon.

The three Shields or Targets are covered with designs beautifully etched and ornamented with gilding. One of these Targets retains the central pike, which is four-edged, perforated transversely, and rises from a rosette of acanthus leaves of steel, which partly conceal the subject below them, a combat of horse and foot on a bridge. Around the target are trophies of mixed arms, drums, flags, and garlands of flowers. Above is the figure of a warrior bearing a scimitar and shield, and mounted on a bear, and below are two captives seated, one of them wearing a turban, with their hands bound behind their backs. On the second shield is engraven the story of Mucius Scaevola. The third has a horseman in the centre, and both these two have similar ornaments with the first described.

The shafts of the two Pikes are each about twenty feet long, and the blades small, square, and resembling the spiked shoes of oriental lances.

The Muskets are very heavy, and have tubular back sights open at the top, being split up through their length so as to admit light vertically.

The Matchlock Muskets and the Pikes have been placed on the west wall of the Hall over the dais; the polished steel Breast and Back Plates and Helmet above described in a trophy over the south-west corner of the dais; and the remaining suits of armour on the Oak Screens, on both sides of the Hall under the corbels, and in the centre of the windows. To provide for this accommodation the twelve black plaster busts, representing what has been supposed to be the Twelve Caesars, were removed and are now in the Clock Tower.

In order to complete the trophies I from time purchased on behalf of the Society other articles of ancient armour of which the following is a description.

1. A demi-suit of Milanese plate-armour, engraved, consisting of Back and Breast Plates, Pauldrons and Rear Braces, with narrow-brimmed Morion, the last engraved with a Coat of Arms and Coronet. *Temp.* Eliz. Burnished steel.
2. Back and Breast Plates, Pauldrons and Rear Braces. Black Iron. *Temp.* Car. I.
3. Ditto. *Temp.* Jac. II.
4. Five Halberts of various types, their dates ranging from the middle of

the sixteenth to the close of the seventeenth century, the staves of four of them covered with red velvet, and the blades of two engraved.

5. A Florentine Rapier with a complex barred guard. Sixteenth century.
6. A Florentine Rapier with a cup hilt. Early seventeenth century.
7. Three Horsemen's Swords, with crossed and barred hilts, Spanish and German. *Circa* A.D. 1550.
8. Short Hunting Sword, mounted with embossed brass. Close of seventeenth century.
9. Pair of Horsemen's Pistols, with wheel locks. *Temp.* Car. II.

In making these purchases, and in the general arrangement of the armour, I derived great assistance from Mr. W. J. Bernhard Smith, one of the Barristers of this Society.

There are still two niches under the two corbels at the foot of the Hall reserved for two trophies or suits, each of which niches is temporarily occupied by a cluster of Morions.

JAMES ANDERSON.

17th January 1862.

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